

**DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**

Secretary Roberta Gassman
201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-7552
FAX: (608) 266-1784
www.dwd.state.wi.us



**State of Wisconsin
Governor Jim Doyle**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
FAMILY SERVICES**

Secretary Helene Nelson
1 West Wilson Street
P.O. Box 7850
Madison, WI 53707-7850
Telephone: (608) 266-9622
FAX: (608) 266-7882
www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov

**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
Economic Support Lead Workers
Training Staff
Child Care Coordinators
W-2 Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers**

**FROM: Amy Mendel-Clemens
Communications Section
Bureau of Health Care Eligibility
Division of Health Care Financing**

BHCE/BWP OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 04-29

DATE: 06/04/2004

FS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	WtW	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	EP	<input type="checkbox"/> ★			

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: Expanding Categorical Eligibility for Food Stamp Cases

CROSS REFERENCE: Food Stamp Handbook 1.03.01, 7 CFR 273.2(j)(2)

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 13, 2004

PURPOSE

This memo outlines the procedure to authorize virtually all food stamp (FS) cases as categorically eligible. This change is expected to:

- Increase the number of food stamp eligible households in Wisconsin,
- Ease workload for local agencies because workers will no longer need to gather asset information, and
- Reduce asset errors.

BACKGROUND

Households considered categorically eligible for FS are not required to pass an asset test or gross or net income tests in order to be found eligible for the program. Federal regulations allow states significant flexibility in determining which households may be considered categorically eligible.

Generally, categorical eligibility for FS must be granted for households who are receiving or are authorized to receive any cash benefit or service from a program that is funded (or partially funded) by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Wisconsin chose to expand categorical eligibility to households whose gross income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and receive "JobNet" access information on a CARES generated notice. "JobNet" is partially funded by TANF. Policies similar to this have already been implemented successfully in seven other states.

By expanding categorical eligibility, workers will no longer need to gather a FS food unit's asset information, which will save case processing time. It will also eliminate quality assurance asset errors. Asset errors make up 7.6% of our total dollar error for 2003-2004.

POLICY

Currently categorically eligible FS food units contain at least one member who is receiving or authorized to receive benefits or services from Wisconsin Works (W2), Child Care Assistance, Tribal TANF, Kinship Care, Caretaker Supplement, or Children First. SSI recipients are individually categorically eligible and as such, their assets are excluded in the FS eligibility determination.

NEW POLICY

Effective June 13, 2004, new FS applicants will be considered categorically eligible if their gross income is at or below 200% FPL and language describing "JobNet" services available to the group is issued on a CARES generated notice of decision. Current FS food units who are not categorically eligible will be converted to categorically eligible with a mass change in CARES on June 13, 2004. A special one-time notice will be issued to approximately 120,000 converted cases with the new JobNet language.

New applicants or ongoing FS food units that include members with the following circumstances will not be categorically eligible:

- Total gross income exceeds 200% of the federal poverty level; or
- Any member is sanctioned due to an Intentional Program Violation; or
- Any member is sanctioned due to a felony drug conviction.

If a group loses categorical eligibility they are subject to an asset test and the gross and net income tests. Asset information must be gathered for any households that are not categorically eligible.

CHANGE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

This new policy has no effect on the new FS change reporting requirements; those requirements remain the same.

CARES CHANGES

NEW CARES NOTICE LANGUAGE

Effective with this change, the following text will appear on approval and change notices generated by CARES for new FS applications and current recipients:

“Wisconsin JobNet is available to you. JobNet is the single largest source of job openings in Wisconsin. You can access JobNet via the internet at <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/jobnet/mapWI.htm> on touch screen monitors at your local Job Center. To locate the Job Center nearest you call 1-888-258-9966.”

CASE PROCESSING

CARES will automatically apply the expanded categorical eligibility policy to new applications and appropriate on-going FS food units and issue a notice that includes the JobNet information. No special action is needed to convert open non-categorically eligible FS cases to categorically eligible FS cases. On June 13, 2004 CARES will convert all appropriate on-going cases to categorically eligible and issue a notice that includes the new JobNet language.

ANBC

The TANF RECV field on ANBC will default to <Y> for all FS cases based on the following criteria:

- Total gross income is at or below 200% FPL; and
- No food unit members are sanctioned due to an IPV; and
- No food unit members are sanctioned due to a felony drug conviction.

A new service code of BB (broad based categorical eligibility) will be entered by CARES. A worker will no longer be able to update this field.

CARES NEGATIVE NOTICE

If the household's gross income goes over 200% of FPL, the FS case will close. A negative notice will be sent with reason code 013: Income reported exceeds the program eligibility standard.

CONTACTS

BHCE CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

★Program Categories – FS – Food Stamps, MA – Medicaid, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WtW – Welfare to Work, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.